

University of Alberta

**Differences in Parenting Styles and Responsiveness: A Comparison of
Mothers and Fathers of Toddlers**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether mothers and fathers differ in their levels of responsiveness to their 2- to 3 1/2-year-old toddlers. An additional aim of this study was to ascertain whether parent ratings of authoritativeness would be related to each other and whether such ratings would be related to observed measures of authoritativeness and responsiveness. Children were observed interacting with each parent individually during a play task. Parents were rated on four dimensions of responsiveness. Additionally, parents filled out questionnaires regarding their parenting styles and their partners' parenting styles. In general, mothers were found to be more responsive than fathers, but mothers and fathers did not differ on all dimensions of responsiveness. Furthermore, no relationship was found between self-reported authoritativeness and observed authoritativeness or responsiveness. Positive relationships were found, however, between parent ratings on the parenting styles questionnaire. Implications and limitations of this study are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Overview of Issue

In North America parents are generally the first and most important people to respond to their newborn child's needs. Parents see that their children are crying, and by inferring that the children are cold or hungry, they feed the infants or cradle them in a blanket. By responding to cues from their infants, parents are able to give the infants what they need to survive. This ability to respond to a child's signals and needs, often termed responsiveness, is critical to the well-being of a newborn infant because they are completely dependent on others to satisfy these needs (Lamb & Lewis, 2004). A parent's ability to be responsive is not only important in the first few months, however, as toddlers and school aged children continue to rely on their parents for emotional support and the fulfillment of their needs well past the preschool years and into adolescence (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). Thus, it appears that children of all ages can benefit from having a parent who is responsive to their needs and desires.

In addition to responding to their infant's needs, parents are also among the first people to teach their children behaviors that they can add to their behavioral repertoires and use in the future. For example, as infants, children learn how to gain the attention of their parents in order to have their needs met. An infant learns that if he or she cries, a parent will likely come feed them or cradle them. Furthermore, as children grow, they also learn about appropriate behaviors by observing their parents behaviors and by deciphering how their

parent will respond when they themselves behave in certain ways. Such learning is one form of socialization and is essential if children are to begin to regulate their own behavior and emotions and gain independence from their parents (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002).

Given that parents are usually at the center of their children's lives, and that they are the first means by which young children are able to have their needs met, it is understandable that scholars have increasingly been focusing on such early parent-child relationships. Since the birth of Bowlby's attachment theories and Baumrind's parenting styles typology in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many researchers have examined how parents' methods of responding to their children can affect their children's well-being (e.g., Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997; Kochanska & Aksan, 2004; Maccoby & Martin 1983). The majority of these studies have focused on mother-child attachment and responsiveness. Attachment theorists believe that the security of infant-mother attachment is dependent upon a mother's (or primary caregiver's) ability to be sensitive to her child's needs, thus indicating just how important a parent's style of interaction can be to the future welfare of that child (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Though it seems logical that the quality of father-child interactions and paternal responsiveness would have an effect on children's social and emotional well-being, relatively few studies have included fathers in their analyses as compared with mothers, and even fewer studies have compared the responsiveness of mothers to that of fathers. Furthermore, studies comparing maternal and paternal measures of responsiveness have yielded equivocal results.

Despite the relative scarcity of studies involving fathers, this focus on family interactions has, nonetheless, led to the development of theories about how parent-child interactions may be critical to the socialization process and to the development of healthy peer relations later in life (e.g., Baumrind, 1971; Rubin & Burgess, 2002; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Just as positive parent-child interactions are thought to aid in the development of positive social skills and self-regulation skills, other interaction styles, such as those that are too permissive or too controlling, are thought to be associated with several behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Researchers have frequently found that problems in parent-child interactions early on in a child's life are associated with problems later on, such as school adjustment difficulties (e.g., Shaw, Owens, Giovannelli, & Winslow, 2001), the development of externalizing behavior problems (e.g., Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994), as well as exacerbations of the symptoms of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and conduct problems (e.g., Johnston & Mash, 2001). In particular, such problems have sometimes been found to be related to an inability on the part of parents to be responsive to the questions, requests, and needs of their child (Johnston, Murray, Hinshaw, Pelham & Hoza, 2002). On the other hand, a parent's ability to be responsive to their child is thought to be positively associated with attachment security, and the development of child compliance and self-regulation skills (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1991; Kochanska, 1997; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Responsive parenting may be particularly important during the early toddler years of about 2 to 3 years, when children are beginning to seek more autonomy from their parents and caretakers. During these years, toddlers are learning new behaviors at an accelerated pace and are beginning to learn how to regulate their own behaviors and emotions (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). This is not an easy task, however, and children at this age may need a great deal of help in these endeavors. For example, parent-child interactions during these years serve as a mechanism by which toddlers learn social expectations, and it is most often their parents who play an integral part in teaching them how to behave accordingly. Furthermore, in order to learn how to successfully regulate their own emotions, it is helpful for a child to have a parent who can act as a resource for them. For example, toddlers often learn to regulate their emotions by watching how their parents react in certain situations (Sorce & Emde, 1981). This method is termed modeling, and is one way in which the affective environment to which children are exposed can impact their emotional competence (Denham, Mitchell-Copeland, Strandberg, Auerbach, & Blair, 1997). Additionally, parents help their children learn such skills by keeping a positive attitude toward their child and by offering support when it is needed (Calkins & Johnson, 1998; Grolnick, Kurowski, McMenamy, Rivkin, & Bridges, 1998). Thus, during the toddler years, parent-child interactions in general, and a parent's responsiveness in particular, play an essential role in determining how successful a toddler is at attaining the goals of behavioral and emotional self regulation, as well as in determining a child's successful socialization.

Present Study

The present study was designed to explore further the parenting styles of mothers and fathers, and the differences between fathers and mothers in their methods of interacting with their young toddlers. More specifically, this study aimed to examine the differences in responsiveness between mothers and fathers. Previous research indicates that there are both stylistic differences between the interactions of fathers versus mothers, as well as differences in the quantity of parent-child interaction between parents (Parke, 2002). Yet, although there have been some studies focusing on the responsiveness of fathers (e.g., Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Kelly, Smith, Green, Berndt, & Rogers, 1998), there have been relatively few studies that directly compare the responsiveness of fathers to that of mothers. Additionally, according to Kochanska and Aksan (2004), those studies that have compared parental responsiveness have largely yielded contradictory results. It is believed that this type of comparison warrants further investigation due to the fact that responsiveness is thought to play such an important role in a child's adjustment and socialization, and also given that many fathers have come to play a more prominent part in the lives of their children in recent decades (Parke, 2002). The aim of conducting this comparison was to expand upon the prior research in the area of responsive parenting by including fathers in the study.

This study also compared parental ratings of parenting styles and compared parent ratings of responsiveness to observational measures of such parenting styles, in order to decipher whether parents are correct in the assumptions they are making regarding the ways they interact with their children.

One rationale for making such comparisons is that they may provide practitioners with valuable practical information that they could use to help parents become more aware of their actual levels of responsiveness. In this way, parents may be better able to adjust their interaction styles for the benefit of their children.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The following chapter provides a brief review of the literature on parent-child interactions and responsiveness. The chapter begins with a discussion and review of the various theories that explain the importance of parent-child interactions. This section focuses primarily on the importance of early parent-child interactions to the process of child socialization and to the development of self-regulation skills. The chapter then turns to one prominent component of parent-child interactions: responsiveness. A discussion of how responsiveness has been operationalized in previous research is then followed by research explaining the value of responsive parenting to children's well-being. The research on paternal responsiveness is then explored, and includes an explanation of the reasons why paternal responsiveness is significant to the child's development. Previous research comparing mothers and fathers in their levels of involvement and responsiveness is then clarified. The chapter then turns to a discussion of parents' perceptions about their parenting styles, followed by the reasons why it might be important to compare these perceptions to observed measures of parenting style and responsiveness. Brief explanations as to the reasons why play and clean-up tasks were chosen for the present study, as well as why 24- to 42-

month-old toddlers and their parents were asked to participate are also included.

Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of the research questions and hypotheses of the current study.

Parent-child Interactions

Over the past thirty years there has been an abundance of research focusing on the ways in which parents impact their children by how they interact with them. Bowlby's (1970) work on parent-child attachment and bonding suggests that infants come to rely on a small number of familiar individuals, namely their parents, with whom they direct their bids for attention in order to have their needs met and survive. Attachment theorists suggest that infants come to learn whether or not they can rely on these individuals for such purposes based on how these individuals respond to the infant's bids during the first years of their lives (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974). If the caregiver responds promptly and interacts appropriately with the infant, the child learns that he or she can trust the caregiver, and a secure attachment is able to form between them. Attachment researchers have found that infants who had developed secure attachments to their mothers were more inclined to explore new environments than insecurely attached infants, using their mothers as a secure base from which to explore. Furthermore, securely attached infants also tended to be more compliant to the demands and prohibitions of their mothers without having been specifically trained to be obedient. Securely attached infants also tend to cry less and to be more affectionate towards their mothers than infants who had more difficult relationships with their mothers. Such findings indicate that secure attachments

with the primary caregiver may be the foundation for early socialization.

Furthermore, attachment theorists suggest that such attachments likely also help to lay the groundwork for healthy socialization in the future. Clearly then, attachment theorists place a great deal of emphasis on early parent-child interactions as being critical to the well-being of a child.

To a large extent the research on parent-child interactions has focused on the effects that parents' interaction styles might have on children's socialization. Baumrind's early work on parenting typologies exemplifies this type of research. Baumrind (1967, 1971) differentiated between three types of parenting styles (i.e., styles of interacting with their children): authoritarian parenting; authoritative parenting; and permissive parenting. The authoritarian parent is demanding and firm, enforcing rules in a rigid manner, discouraging independence, placing strict limits on a child's ability to express their needs, and tolerating no insolence (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The permissive parent, on the other hand, is content to let the child do as they please, valuing the child's independence, making few demands for mature behavior, imposing few strict rules for the child to follow, and often allowing the child to act on his or her aggressive impulses. Both of these parenting styles have been shown to be related to certain problems and deficits in the children reared by such parents (e.g., Baumrind & Black, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parenting, for example, is associated with low social interactions, as well as low affection, low spontaneity, low curiosity, low self-esteem, and low originality on the part of these children (Baldry & Farrington, 1998; Coopersmith, 1967; Maccoby &

Martin, 1983 Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007). Children reared by permissive parents also tend to suffer from impairments. For example, Baumrind and Black (1967) found that children who were lower on self-reliance tended to have more permissive parents. These children also tend to score lower on ratings of independence and social responsibility than other children. Recent research also suggests that such impairments may linger into adulthood. For example, Patock-Peckham, Cheong, Balhorn, & Nagoshi (2001) found that permissive parenting was related to lower levels of self-regulatory processes and problems with alcohol abuse in college students. Furthermore, Gordon (2004) found that people whose parents were more permissive during their childhood tended to be less socially responsible as adults.

The third parenting style in Baumrind's typology is the authoritative parenting style, and it is sometimes seen as striking a balance between the previous two styles. Authoritative parents are warm, loving, and supportive (Baumrind, 1989; 1991). They respect the individuality of their children and support their struggle to gain independence by encouraging verbal give and take. These parents, however, also demand mature behavior from their children, thus enforcing rules in a firm, yet responsive manner. As opposed to authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, much research (e.g., Querido, Warner, & Eyberg, 2002) attests to the fact that more authoritative parenting styles may be predictive of fewer child behavior problems. For example, Baumrind (1971) found preschool daughters of authoritative parents to be more independent than daughters of other parents, and found preschool sons of authoritative parents to be more socially

responsible than their counterparts. Furthermore, it has also been found that a demanding yet nurturing interaction style, commonly associated with authoritative parenting, is a more effective means by which to teach children prosocial responses and to have those children transfer this behavior to new situations (Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, Metindogan, & Evans, 2006; Yarrow, Waxler, & Scott, 1971). Nair (1999) also found that the authoritative style of parenting was associated with higher levels of attachment security in preschool-aged children. Additionally, Coopermith (1967) found that warm, democratic, and firm rule enforcement now associated with authoritative parenting styles was associated with high self-esteem in elementary-school-aged children. Similarly, a more recent study by Milevsky et. al.(2007) found that authoritative mothering was related to higher self-esteem, higher life-satisfaction, and lower levels of depression in adolescents. Finally, Park and Bauer (2002) found that European American adolescents who perceived their parents to be more authoritative tended to score higher on measures of academic achievement than adolescents who felt that their parents were more authoritarian or more permissive. Thus, it seems probable that the style of interaction that is most likely to foster self-esteem, achievement, and pro-social behavior in children is one in which parents make firm yet reasonable demands, do not impose unreasonable restrictions, and offer support and direction in a manner that makes the child feel that they have some choice and control over the situation is (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

The development of emotional and behavioral self-regulation has also been found to be associated with the underlying interaction patterns of the

authoritative parenting style. Calkins and Johnson (1998), for example, found that emotion regulation in toddlers was associated with maternal parenting styles that were not overly controlling and that were warm and positive. Furthermore, Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) found that children whose parents were accepting and allowed their children more autonomy, while at the same time implementing strict rules and guidelines for their children to follow (in line with authoritative parenting), were higher than other children on many aspects of behavioral self-regulation, such as self-reliance, psychosocial maturity, and work orientation. Conversely, Baumrind has suggested that just as authoritarian and permissive styles of parenting have been shown to be associated with lower self-esteem and social competence; these styles are also likely to undermine children's ability to internalize the proper behavior that would normally lead to self-regulation (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). And indeed, research has shown that authoritarian parents tend to have more children that are overly aggressive than other types of parents (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This association points to the fact that these children may lack the ability to regulate both their emotions and their behaviors, thus lashing out at others when their emotions get out of control. Research has also shown that children of permissive parents also have a decreased ability to regulate their behaviors compared with children of authoritative parents. For example, Baumrind and Black (1967) found that children reared by permissive parents lacked impulse control. This finding indicates that they lacked the ability to regulate their behaviors when tempted by something that they desire. Additionally, Patock-Peckham, and Morgan-Lopez (2006) found that having a

parent with a permissive parenting style was directly linked to impulsivity in adulthood and indirectly linked to alcohol abuse in adulthood. Hence, it appears that parenting styles, or methods of interaction, greatly affect a child's ability to regulate their behaviors and emotions, thus affecting their ability to get along with others and to adapt to their social environments. Furthermore, problems with emotional and behavioral regulation can have lasting effects on children's lives, and as the aforementioned research (e.g. Gordon, 2004; Patock-Peckham, & Morgan-Lopez, 2006) indicates, such problems may even continue to impact their lives and their decisions well into adulthood.

It is, however, important to note that the majority of the studies mentioned in this literature review involve samples from Western countries. Although responsive parenting is likely always going to be beneficial to children, it is possible that the results of the present study, and of previous studies, may not necessarily generalize to families in all other Cultures.

Although much research attests to the fact that negative parent-child interactions are linked to behavioral problems, and although links have been found between parent-child interactions, healthy socialization, and emotional well-being, it is important to note that little is known about the direction of causality among these variables. We cannot say for certain whether negative interactions with parents necessarily *cause* emotional and behavioral problems or vice versa. Furthermore, there are likely many other intervening variables affecting both parent-child interactions and emotional and behavioral problems.

Such variables might include environmental stressors and genetic predispositions to conduct problems, among other problems.

Parental Responsiveness

Definitions of Responsiveness

There have been a variety of different definitions of responsiveness in the literature over the years, and many of these definitions share similarities. For example, several of these characterizations, such as those of Ainsworth and other attachment theorists, involved the ability of the pair to be in harmony with each other on a variety of behaviors and thoughts (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). With regards to parenting then, responsiveness has often been seen as the ability of a parent to be sensitive to the states and needs of the child and to adapt and respond accordingly to the signals or bids that the child directs toward them (Kochanska & Aksan, 2004; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Responding accordingly to the bids and behaviors of the child, however, does not always mean that a parent should give the child whatever they are signaling that they desire. By contrast, many social learning theorists believe that responsiveness involves the understanding that the child's desires and behaviors may not always be in line with what is viewed as acceptable behavior. Thus, social learning theorists believe that responsiveness involves contingent reinforcement, whereby a parent should respond flexibly to the child, contingent on their behavior (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These theorists believe that by responding differently to desired and undesired behaviors, and by offering

affection and praise contingent on good behavior, a parent is able to shape the child's future actions.

In their 2004 article, Kochanska and Aksan focused on the ability of parents to be responsive to a variety of different child bids, rather than simply to negative bids as in many previous studies in the area. Their attention to both positive and negative child bids points to the fact that the definition of parental responsiveness should likely include the understanding that, in order to be truly responsive, parents should respond differently to different types of bids. In this way, the definition of responsiveness differs from that of warmth.

In her longitudinal study looking at the familial antecedents of optimal competence in children and adolescents, Baumrind (1989) shifted her focus from the three parenting styles stated earlier (ie., authoritative/authoritarian/permissive) to the analysis of two new dimensions. Toward the end of her longitudinal study, Baumrind distinguished between two underlying interpersonal modalities in parenting: Responsiveness and demandingness. The parenting strategies and disciplinary practices that Baumrind placed in the demandingness realm include: direct confrontation, intrusive-directiveness, monitoring, and a pattern of firm, consistent discipline in conjunction with high demands for maturity from children. She acknowledged that some of these strategies, such as high maturity demands, firm control, and monitoring, are beneficial to children, whereas, others, such as coercive control and intrusive-directiveness are not.

Conversely, Baumrind (1989) placed attachment and bonding, affective warmth, unconditional acceptance, cognitive responsiveness, involvement,

reciprocity, and sensitive attunement, in the realm of responsiveness. The conceptualization of responsiveness that came out of Baumrind's study included many aspects of the definitions previously used by other researchers and could be seen as the seminal definition of the word. Baumrind included Bowlby's (1970) and Ainsworth's (1973) determinants of attachment, such as warmth, sensitivity, and bonding in her definition. Schaefer's (1959) and Becker's (1964) affective warmth (or emotional expressiveness) construct was also included. Affective warmth, however, implies that non-contingent, as well as contingent affection, should be directed toward the child, and that contingent reinforcement, as suggested by the social learning theorists, must be balanced with non-contingent expressions of love and approval in order to be considered responsive (Baumrind, 1989). Baumrind believed that responsive parenting involved being sensitively attuned to the child's needs, knowing when to respond to the child's needs or when to enforce rules and discipline, and finally being able to implement such disciplinary strategies in a warm and sensitive manner.

Using meta-analysis, Rothbaum and Weisz (1994) also identified responsiveness to be an important parenting dimension and their definition shares similar characteristics to those of other theorists, such as Baumrind. In their analysis they found that many of the caregiving variables analyzed were interrelated, thus suggesting that such variables were aspects of a larger factor that they termed "responsiveness-acceptance". Under the umbrella of responsiveness-acceptance they emphasize parent-child mutuality and shared goals, as well as cooperation, support, acceptance, responsiveness, non-coercive parenting

methods, and positive control. Finally, the responsiveness-acceptance construct also emphasizes the importance of a parent being in synchrony with their child and being in tune with the child's needs, rather than being in opposition to such needs.

Importance of the Construct

Although theorists may view responsive parenting in slightly different ways depending on their theoretical orientation, with social learning theorists describing the construct differently than attachment theorists or other parent-child relation theorists, most agree that responsiveness is one of the critical components of childrearing. In fact, most of these parenting theorists suggest that one of the main components of healthy parent-child interactions in the development of appropriate self-regulation skills is responsive, sensitive parenting (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002; Kochanska, 1993). Furthermore, although the definition of responsiveness may vary slightly, these theorists all acknowledge that parents who are responsive to the needs of their children will, in turn, rear children who are more likely to seek independence, attention, and control in positive and non-coercive ways (Maccoby, 1992; Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994).

Responsive parenting may be important to the well-being of children for a variety of reasons. For example, Bowlby believed that a mother who is sensitively responsive to infant behavioral cues was critical to the development of healthy parent-child attachment (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1993). Ainsworth, Bell and Stayton (1974) also posited that parental acceptance of the child, validation of the child's needs, and the ability to be accessible to the child and to

respond sensitively to his or her needs tends to facilitate the development of desired behaviors. In fact, Ainsworth and colleagues are among the many theorists that have suggested that parental responsiveness may assist in the development of both emotional and behavioral self-regulation skills (e.g. Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). Furthermore, many researchers (e.g. Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Emde, Biringen, Clyman, & Oppenheim, 1991; Kochanska, 2002) have found that if parents are supportive and responsive during the toddler years, young children will begin to align with, and willingly comply with their parents during the socialization process. It is believed that through that close alliance, brought on in part by responsive parenting, young children are able to develop the foundations of empathy and conscience (Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). Responsive parenting has also been found to be an influential factor in the development of young children's cognitive functioning, attention span, and language development (Bornstein & Tamis-LeMonda, 1997; Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, Baumwell & Damast, 1996). Finally, responsive parenting is also thought to be important in child development because much research (e.g., Johnston et al., 2002) has shown that a lack of responsiveness can lead to, or exacerbate, a variety of externalizing behavior problems in children and adolescents, such as conduct problems and AD/HD.

One notable example of the importance of responsive parenting to positive child outcomes comes from Baumrind's work on parenting typologies. Near the end of her work on the familial antecedents of optimal child competence and child outcomes, Baumrind (1989) discovered that the two main dimensions of responsiveness and demandingness underlined all three of her early parenting

typologies (i.e., authoritative/authoritarian/permissive styles). For example, authoritarian parenting is thought to involve high levels of demandingness in combination with low levels of responsiveness. Many theorists, including Baumrind herself, now believe that it is the combination of the underlying dimensions of high responsiveness and high demandingness seen in authoritative parenting that makes this style so successful in helping children to attain emotional and behavioral self-regulation, social and cognitive competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Baumrind, 1989; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). For example, it was found that high demandingness and high responsiveness were likely responsible for the results of Baumrind's (1967, 1971) studies, in which authoritative parenting was positively related to high levels of social competence, self-assertion, and social responsibility in 8-9 year old children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Grolnick and Farkas' (2002) review of self-regulation development suggests that responsive parenting is, indeed, an important factor in the development of both emotional and behavioral self-regulation in children. Emotional self-regulation refers to a movement from reliance on outside sources of regulation to an increased capacity for autonomous and adaptive regulation (Grolnick, Bridges, & Connell, 1996). Such a movement has long been considered a hallmark of early development. A review of the research in this area indicates that there is strong evidence that emotional self-regulation is made possible, in part, by responsive, tolerant, supportive, uncoercive parenting styles, all of which fit nicely within Rothbaum's and Weisz's (1994) responsiveness-

acceptance construct. For example, Calkins (1997) found that mothers who engaged in more negative, interfering, and coercive control tactics in a laboratory setting had toddlers who were less able to regulate their emotions and became more distressed by frustrating events. Thus, in this study, effective emotion regulation was associated with maternal styles that were positive and not overly controlling. Additionally, Kogan and Carter (1995) found that mothers who were empathic and emotionally available, and whose responsiveness was contingent on positive behaviors and emotions, as determined by observational data, had children who were better able to regulate their emotions. Furthermore, Grolnick et al. (1998) found that mothers who were responsive to their children's signals of distress, but who did not take responsibility for managing their children's distress above and beyond what was called for by their distress levels, had children who were less distressed. Thus, it appears that children's emotional self-regulation skills were facilitated by parenting styles in which children were allowed opportunities to autonomously regulate their emotions. This idea of allowing children opportunities to act autonomously while, at the same time, offering support when it is needed, is also in line with most definitions of responsiveness. For example, Ainsworth emphasized the meshing of parent and child behaviors in her definition of responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Thus, if the child has the ability to regulate their emotions in a positive and autonomous manner in a given situation, a responsive parent would acknowledge this ability and allow the child to act autonomously.

Additional research points to the fact that behavioral self-regulation is also greatly facilitated by parenting styles that emphasize responsiveness. For example, Kochanska (1997) argued that if children feel that their parents are responsive to their needs, the children will respond by being responsive to their parents' requests and will develop a desire to be cooperative. This was found to be the case. Mother-child dyads high in mutual responsiveness were found to use less power assertion than dyads low in mutual responsiveness. This indicates that mothers who were more responsive had toddlers who were working with their parents rather than against them, and who were behaving according to their mothers' wishes, thus eliminating the need for either of them to use coercive measures. It is thought that such mutual responsiveness allows children to internalize parental goals, thus allowing them to begin to feel an internal desire to comply with parental requests for good behavior. Kochanska (2002) used the term "committed compliance" to delineate this type of eager compliance with parents' requests. Committed compliance differs from situational compliance in that it does not require external pressure; and it is this type of compliance that is thought to be involved in the development of a child's conscience and sense of morality.

Just as responsive parenting helps children gain control in positive and adaptive ways, it is believed that parents who are rejecting and unresponsive to the needs of their children are more likely to rear children who are motivated to use socially unacceptable methods of gaining attention and control (Rothbaum & Weisz, 1994). Research indicates that a great deal of externalizing problems and

problems of socialization, such as AD/HD and conduct disorder, are thought to be directly linked to a lack of responsive parenting (e.g., Carlson, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1995; Johnston et al., 2002). It is hypothesized that parental difficulties in responding appropriately to their children's needs may account for some of the poorly regulated behaviors and disinhibited attitudes seen in children with behavior problems (Johnston & Mash, 2001).

Parent characteristics are not, however, the only determinant of child outcomes. Parent characteristics, child characteristics (e.g., temperament), child behaviors, and environmental factors (e.g., family stressors) likely all operate in tandem in order to affect parent-child interactions and a parent's ability to be responsive (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). It is, therefore, important to note that the link between parental responsiveness and child behavioral problems is not necessarily a causal one. The studies in the area of responsiveness and AD/HD do, however, lend support to the idea that a parent's ability to be responsive to the needs of his or her child may play a significant role in the future well-being of that child (Johnston & Mash, 2001). It is for this reason that the focus of the current study was on parental responsiveness. Though the nature of parent-child relationships are far from being unidirectional, with an important piece of the puzzle involving a child's ability to be sensitive and responsive to parental bids, and though children's actions often affect a parent's ability to be responsive, much can be learned from focusing only on parental responsiveness and therefore this is the path that the author has chosen to take. It is, however, understood that many other factors,

including child responsiveness, can play a part in child outcomes and it would be important to focus on such aspects in the future.

Previous findings

It is important to note that in the studies that have previously been mentioned, parental responsiveness is seen as being synonymous with maternal responsiveness. This is largely because fathers have rarely been involved in studies in this area. There is, therefore, a dearth of research in the area of paternal responsiveness. As previously stated, however, previous research in the area of maternal responsiveness indicated that mothers who are responsive to their child's needs and behaviors tend to have children who are more securely attached (e.g. Ainsworth, 1979), who are more compliant with their mother's wishes (e.g. Kochanska, 1997), who are better able to regulate their emotions (e.g. Calkins & Johnson, 1998), and who are less likely to have behavior and conduct problems later in childhood (e.g. Johnston et al., 2002).

Importance of Studying Paternal Responsiveness

The majority of studies of responsiveness have looked at mother-child relationships or parent-child relationships more generally; yet, there is evidence that father-child relationships in particular are important to study. For example, security of attachment to both mothers and fathers was found to be predictive of infants' sociability (Sagi, Lamb, & Gardner, 1986). Research also indicates that father-child attachment has effects on infants above and beyond the effects of mother-child attachment. For example, some infants that tend to have negative emotionality were shown to become more negative when their fathers were less

sensitive and less involved in their children's lives (Belsky, Fish, & Isabella, 1991). Additionally, although Belsky, Garduque, and Hrnecir (1984) found that infant-mother attachment affected cognitive performance more than infant-father attachment, the security of infant-father attachment was still found to affect such performance. In addition to such findings, there is also ample evidence that, at times, fathers may play a unique role in promoting the well-being of their children. For example, fathers were found to spend an unusually large amount of time interacting with their insecurely-avoidant daughters (Fagot & Kavanagh, 1993). Such interaction may be critical because, in this same study, mothers were found to be less involved with these children than with more securely attached infants. Thus, it appears that, in many circumstances, fathers' may have unique experiences when interacting with their children, and that these experiences may differ from the experiences of mothers.

A great deal of literature points to the fact that the quality of paternal involvement and of father-child interactions are related to children's social, emotional, and cognitive well being (e.g., Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Parke, 1996; Pleck, 1997). For example, there have been a number of studies which indicated that more sensitive and responsive father-child interactions are associated with enhanced socialization skills (e.g., Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Kelly, et. al., 1998). Hart, Nelson, Robinson, Olsen, McNeilly-Choque, Porter, and McKee (1998, 2000) also found that fathers who were more playful, patient, and understanding had children who were less aggressive with peers, indicating that they showed both emotional and behavioral

self-control. Research by Youngblade and Belsky (1992) yielded similar results, indicating that children who have more positive interactions with their fathers are likely to interact more positively with peers later on in life. Similarly, it has been found that fathers who are more sensitive to their 5-year-olds' emotional states have children who are more competent with peers three years later (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). Additionally, Yogman, Kindlon, and Earls (1995) reported that fathers who were more involved had children with higher scores on intelligence tests, even after controlling for differences in socio-economic status. Finally, Magill-Evans and Harrison (1999) found that fathers' sensitivity to their 3-month-old and 12-month-old infants was predictive of their linguistic and cognitive abilities at 18 months. Taken together, these findings suggest that fathers play a unique role in the lives of their children. Given this fact, it would be beneficial, if not crucial, to continue on with the relatively recent trend of including fathers in parenting research.

Quantity and Quality of Parental Involvement and Responsiveness

Research indicates that there are differences in both the quantity and quality (or style) of maternal and paternal involvement in children's lives (Parke, 2002). Although several researchers (e.g. Pleck, 1997; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001) have found that the level of father involvement has increased over the past few decades, this amount is still less than that of maternal involvement. These facts are true of both intact and divorced families. Furthermore, the lower levels of paternal involvement remain intact on weekdays as well as weekends (although paternal involvement is shown to increase slightly

on weekends) (Yeung, et al., 2001). Additionally, Yeung and his colleagues (2001) also found that the absolute level of paternal involvement decreases as the child develops.

There are also a variety of stylistic differences in the ways that mothers and fathers are involved with their children. For example, from infancy through to middle childhood, mothers tend to play more of a managerial role than fathers, such as instructing the child to eat, bathe, and clean up toys, taking the child to appointments, setting the boundaries for play activities, and setting the limits of social contact and access to peers (Power & Parke, 1982; Russell & Russell, 1987). Furthermore, although research indicates that fathers have begun to spend more time in childcare activities, mothers still spend much more time engaged in such activities than fathers do (Pleck, 1997). Yet, although fathers spend less time in caregiving activities than mothers, they have been shown to spend more time interacting in play activities than mothers do (Parke, 2002). Such play also tends to be much more physical and tactile when fathers are engaged in the activity, whereas play among mother-child dyads tends to be more object-mediated and didactic (MacDonald & Parke, 1984; Parke, 2002; Power & Parke, 1982).

One might guess that, just as there are differences in the levels and types of paternal versus maternal involvement, there may be differences in levels of and types of parental responsiveness. There is, however, very little research comparing maternal responsiveness to paternal responsiveness. Furthermore, the studies that have appeared in this area seem to draw contradictory conclusions. For example, Kochanska and Aksan (2004) found that mothers were more

responsive than fathers, as indicated by both macroscopic ratings of overall responsiveness (i.e., sensitivity, acceptance, and cooperation) and by microscopic ratings looking at responsiveness during different types of bids, such as questions or commands. Additionally, Volling, McElwain, Notaro, and Herrera (2002) compared mothers and fathers on indicators of emotional availability and found that mothers were more emotionally available than fathers. Furthermore, when observed with their 8-month-olds, Power and Parke (1983) found that fathers were less sensitive to cues regarding their infants' interests than mothers were. Moreover, when observed interacting with their 19-month-old toddlers during a play task, fathers were found to be less sensitive with both their daughters and their sons than mothers were (Lovas, 2005).

The previously stated results are, however, by no means conclusive, as many other studies in this area indicate that fathers are just as responsive to the cues and needs of their infants and toddlers. For example, Braungart-Rieker, Garwood, Powers, and Notaro (1998) and Nataro and Volling (1999) both found that mothers and fathers showed similar levels of sensitivity toward, and mutual engagement with, their 1-year-old and 4-month old infants respectively. Furthermore, in some studies (e.g. Parke & Sawin, 1975, 1976) fathers were found to be just as sensitive to their infants' cues, such as auditory distress signals, vocalizations, and mouth movements, and just as responsive to those cues as mothers. Finally, fathers have sometimes been found to express as much warmth toward their children as mothers, but such warmth was simply found to be displayed in a different manner. For example, Russell and Russell (1989) found

that mothers who expressed higher levels of warmth about their children in an interview were more likely to display more active concern, caretaking, and playful joking behaviors during observations, as well as less negative reactions to a range of child behaviors. On the other hand, fathers who expressed more warmth during the interview tended to display more negative reactions toward daughters when they initiated shared activities and more negative reactions to sons when they demonstrated competence. Russell and Russell suspected that reacting in negative ways toward certain behaviors may be a method that some fathers use in order to signal to their children that they expect increased competence and, in effect, that they truly care about their children's well-being.

The equivocal results in the area of parental responsiveness may be attributable to many factors, such as differences in methodology, differences in the age of the children studied, and/or differences in the socio-economic status of the populations studied. Given the conflicting results of studies in this area, it is believed that more studies of this nature are required in order to further our understanding on this topic.

Thus, although paternal involvement is less frequent during infancy and childhood than maternal involvement, research indicates that fathers have an important impact on their child's development and well-being, apart from the impact of mothers (Parke, 2002). With this being said, it is therefore crucial that studies be undertaken in order to discover how fathers differ, if at all, in their levels of sensitivity and responsiveness to their children than mothers. In this way we might discover that a more global and inclusive approach to parenting, which

recognizes the important role that various caregivers play in the lives of children, would be to the benefit of children.

Parental Perceptions of Parenting Styles

Given that consistency in parenting within the home is associated with positive outcomes for children, it seems especially important to compare the parenting styles of mothers and fathers (Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1994). Although parents' perceptions of parenting styles may not necessarily reflect how parents actually interact with their children, parental ratings of their parenting styles offer crucial information as to how parents wish to interact with their children, as well as how well parents think they are doing at accomplishing these goals. Additionally, the ability to decipher parents' perceptions of their partners' parenting styles, as well as how these perceived styles differ from their own, as assessed by the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSDQ) (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandeleco, Frost Olsen, & Hart, 2001) may be especially valuable, given that parents who believe their partners' parenting styles differ from their own are shown to have increased marital discord, which is likely to negatively affect the well-being of the children involved (Acitelli, Douvan, & Veroff, 1993). Finally, given that very few studies in the area of parenting styles are observational in nature, a comparison between self-reported parenting styles and observed measures of such styles will help us to decipher whether parents are accurate in how they believe they are parenting, as well as how they perceive their partner to parent. In this way we will be one step closer to being able to educate parents about differences between their parenting goals and their actual styles, so

that they might become more aware of how their actual parenting styles might be affecting their children.

The few studies that have compared different types of self-reported parenting behaviors and observational measures of such behaviors have generally found that self-reports are not similar to observed behaviors. Browne (2000) directly compared self-report questionnaires of parenting styles with observational measures of such styles and found no similarity between the two. For example, Browne found that, although fathers rated themselves as being firmer disciplinarians than their partners, they were not observed to use firmer discipline strategies with their children. Furthermore, Chi and Hinshaw (2002) found that mothers who suffered from depressive symptoms tended to rate themselves as having more negative parenting styles; however depressive symptoms were not found to be related to observed measures of parenting style. Additionally, Busch (2006) found that, despite rating themselves in a similar manner to other participants in terms of parenting styles and parenting difficulties, women who displayed unresolved mourning after the death of a loved one appeared significantly less authoritative and more authoritarian than other mothers during parent-child interactions.

As is the case with research in the area of responsiveness, there is currently very little information in the literature about fathers' parenting styles, and there are even fewer studies comparing maternal styles to paternal styles. The few studies that have compared mothers' self-reported parenting styles to those of fathers tend to indicate that mothers' parenting styles are more consistent with the

authoritative style, whereas fathers' styles are more consistent with the authoritarian parenting, especially with regards to child-rearing practices and discipline (Baker & Heller, 1996; Russell, Hart, Robinson, & Olsen, 2003; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). Finally, a relatively recent study by Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) comparing similarities and differences in parenting styles between mothers and fathers in the same family using the *PSDQ* (Robinson et al, 2001) found that the correspondence between maternal and paternal parenting styles among parents in the same family was modest at best. Parents who reported themselves to be high on permissiveness tended to be married to people who rated themselves similarly, however, self-reported authoritarianism was only modestly correlated, and self-reported authoritativeness among one parent was completely unrelated to authoritativeness in the other parent. The results of this study also indicate that fathers tend to perceive their spouses as being more authoritative, more permissive, and less authoritarian than themselves, and that mothers tend to view their spouses as simply less authoritative. Finally, parents whose reported styles were similar were more accurate at reporting the styles of their partner than partners whose styles were dissimilar. Given that Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) did not find similarities between self-report data on parenting styles and partner-report data on such styles, is clear that parents may not always be accurate at rating both their own styles and their partners' styles of interacting with their children.

Play tasks

Many different types of tasks are used in observational studies of parenting (e.g., Johnston et al., 2002; Kochanska & Aksan, 2004); however the play task was chosen for the current study because play tasks have been used extensively in the literature as means of observing parents and children interacting in naturalistic, semi-naturalistic, and laboratory settings (e.g. Calzada, Eyberg, Rich, & Querido, 2004; Johnston et al., 2002; Kochanska & Aksan, 2004; Kochanska, Tjebkes, & Forman, 1998). In studies of responsiveness, different tasks are often used in order to elicit different types of child and parent bids (Kochanska & Aksan, 2004), however a play task was used in the present study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the play task was used because it was thought that a play task would serve to elicit a number of positive bids from both parents and toddlers, as it is meant to be a fun task for both parties. Furthermore, given that fathers have been found to be more involved in play than other activities, it was thought that using a play task might give fathers a chance to get more involved in the study and might therefore yield unique results (Parke, 2002). Additionally, given that the play task is meant to be more child-directed than other tasks, such as teaching tasks or clean-up tasks, it was thought that the play task would serve to elicit differences between parents on the dimension of authoritative control and sensitivity. During the toddler years children begin to try to exert some autonomy over their lives. It was anticipated that a play task might give toddlers a chance to express their desires and strive for a level of independence because play often does not follow the same strict rules as other

tasks. It was also thought that a child-directed play task would give parents the opportunity to allow their toddlers some autonomy and some control over the situation, while at the same time, allowing the parents to be actively involved in the task.

Although a second task, such as a clean-up task, was beyond the constraints of this study, we do concede that it is possible that other tasks, such as a clean-up task, may serve to elicit differing levels of responsiveness from both parents. For example, a clean-up task may be distressing for some children, thereby serving to elicit more negative bids on both sides, such as tantrums from children and angry demands from parents. Additionally, given that fathers and mothers have been found to be differentially involved in play versus managerial roles, such as clean-up (e.g., Power & Parke, 1982; Russell & Russell, 1987), it is likely that levels of paternal responsiveness may have been different if a different task was chosen for the present study. It will, therefore, be important for future studies to compare mothers and fathers on dimensions of responsiveness during these types of tasks as well.

Toddlers

Twenty-four to 42-month-old toddlers were chosen as the target sample for this study primarily because it is at this age that social competence becomes more elaborate. The second and third years of life represent a unique developmental stage, when toddlers begin to exert more self control, and to assert their autonomy in a struggle for independence (Keenan & Wakschlag, 2000; Kopp, 1982). As such, this is often a time when parents begin to struggle with

how to allow their children more opportunities for them to exert their autonomy and independence, while at the same time knowing that they are still responsible for the safety and well-being of their children. It was thought that in studying parents interacting with their 2- and 3-year-old children, we might be able to decipher differential strategies that fathers and mothers use in order to maintain some authority, while at the same time allowing children opportunities for independence.

Summary

Parent-child interactions have been at the forefront of research in the area of child development for the past 50 years. Bowlby's research on attachment and Baumrind's research in the area of parenting styles have generated much attention, as it has become evident that the ways in which parents behave towards their children can have dramatic effects on child outcomes (Baumrind, 1989). Parent-child interactions during the toddler years serve as a mechanism by which young children learn social expectations, as well as emotional and behavioral self-regulation (Brosnon, 2002; Grolnick & Farkas, 2002). In particular, one aspect of parent-child interactions, termed responsiveness, has been shown to play a prominent role in the development of early socialization skills, self-regulation skills, cognitive development, and language skills in children (Bornstein & Tamis-LeMonda, 1997; Grolnick & Farkas, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 1996). Furthermore, a lack of parental responsiveness is often associated with many behavior problems in children (Johnston & Mash, 2001).

In conclusion, extensive research has been conducted in the area of parent-child attachment and the effects of parent-child interactions on children's outcomes. Although theorists believe that fathers do, in fact, play an essential role in their children's lives, and that the quality of father-child interactions does impact children's well-being, to date the majority of the research in the area of parent-child interactions and parental responsiveness has focused only on mothers (Lamb & Lewis, 2002; Parke, 2002). Furthermore, there is a scarcity of research directly comparing maternal and paternal responsiveness. Such research is justified, given that the roles of North American fathers have begun to change over the past 20 years, and given that the few studies that have compared mothers and fathers in terms of responsiveness have yielded contradictory results (Kochanska & Aksan, 2004; Parke & Sawin, 1975, 1976; Yeung, et al. 2001). Additionally, research continues to suggest that responsive parenting can positively affect child outcomes, whereas unresponsive parenting is related to a variety of behavioral and social problems in children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1989; Johnston & Mash, 2001). It was, therefore, determined that a study of parental responsiveness that includes both fathers and mothers is warranted because it would add to the existing body of literature in many unique ways.

Purpose of the Study and Hypotheses

The purpose of the present study was to add to the existing body of literature in the area of parental responsiveness. One objective of this study was to decipher whether there are differences between fathers and mothers in the quantity and quality of responsiveness to their 2- to 3-and-a-half-year old toddlers'

changing needs. The current study examined mother/father differences in authoritativeness, sensitivity, affective tone, and involvement with the child during a play task, and overall responsiveness to the child's needs, in order to decipher whether mothers are truly more responsive than fathers, as some studies (e.g. Kochanska & Aksan, 2004) suggest. A second global objective of this study was to compare mothers' ratings of their parenting styles to those of fathers, and to compare these ratings to parents' actual styles of interacting with their child, as observed during the play task. Parents were asked to rate their own parenting styles, as well as the parenting styles of the other parent, in order to decipher whether parents' ratings of their own parenting styles and of their partners' parenting styles were congruent and whether these styles were congruent with observed measures of such styles.

In order to answer these questions, the following hypotheses were made, based upon theories of attachment and parenting styles, as well as past research in the area of parent-child interactions and parental responsiveness:

Differences in Responsiveness

Sensitivity and Overall Responsiveness:

1. Based upon research indicating that fathers generally still spend less time interacting with their children than mothers (e.g., Yeung et al., 2001), mothers were expected to show more sensitivity and to be higher on measures of overall responsiveness than fathers. It was thought that mothers might be better able to understand the needs of their children and to be sensitive to those needs because they have had more time to learn

about these needs during their numerous hours spent interacting with their children every week. These hypotheses are also based upon previous research findings (e.g., Kochanska & Aksan, 2004; Lovas, 2005) which indicate that, in general, mothers are more sensitive to the needs of their children and more responsive to these needs than fathers.

Affective Tone

2. Furthermore, given that affective warmth (or emotional expressiveness) is almost always placed within the definition of responsiveness (e.g. Baumrind, 1998), mothers were expected to show more warmth and affection towards their children than fathers. This hypothesis is largely based on previous research, which indicates that mothers are more responsive than fathers (e.g. Kochanska & Aksan, 2004).

Authoritativeness

3. Mothers were also expected to display more authoritative tendencies than fathers on observational measures. This hypothesis is based on previous findings which indicate that mothers and fathers both tend to rate mothers as being more authoritative than fathers, (e.g. Russell et. al., 2003; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994).

Parental Involvement in Play

4. Research has generally shown that fathers are more involved in play activities with their children than in childcare activities (e.g., Kotelchuck, 1976), thus fathers were expected to show similar levels of involvement to mothers during this task. It was not, however, expected that fathers would

surpass mothers in their involvement in the play because it was thought that mothers would be equally responsive during both play and childcare activities. Given that mothers were expected to be more sensitive to the needs of their children than fathers, it was thought that mothers would understand their children's need for assistance during the play task and that they would, therefore, try to be involved in any way that might be required.

Differences between Parent Ratings and Observed

Responsiveness/Authoritativeness

5. Given that parents' self-report ratings of their parenting styles were often not found to be correlated with observed parenting practices in previous research (e.g., Brown, 2000; Busch, 2006; Chi & Hinshaw; 2002), it was predicted that parents' self-reports of their levels of authoritativeness would not be linked to observed measures of parental responsiveness or authoritativeness in the present study. Furthermore, because it appears that parents may not always be very accurate at rating their own parenting styles, it is hypothesized that parent perceptions of their partners' level of authoritativeness will not be found to be correlated with observed measures of responsiveness and authoritativeness.

Differences between Self-Reports and Partner-Reports of Parenting Styles

6. Finally, a relatively recent study by Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) using the *PSDQ* (Robinson, Mandelco, Frost Olsen, & Hart, 2001) found no relationship between self-reported authoritativeness in mothers

and self-reported authoritativeness in fathers. Given these findings, it was expected that mothers' ratings of their own authoritative parenting styles would not be correlated with fathers' self-reports. Additionally, given that previous research (e.g., Russell, et al., 2003; Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino 2005) indicates that both mothers and fathers tend to rate mothers as being more authoritative than fathers, it was predicted that there would be no relationship between mothers' and fathers' self-reports of their own authoritativeness and their reports of their partners' authoritativeness.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methods and Design

This chapter provides a description of the families who participated in the study, as well as the measures and procedures that were used in order to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses put forth in the previous chapter. Finally, coding procedures will be discussed.

Participants

Prior to collecting data, ethical approval was obtained from the Department of Educational Psychology Research and Ethics Committee at the University of Alberta. The participants recruited for this study were also part of a larger research project which investigated the influences of bidirectional parent-child influences on future emotional development and behavior.

Participants were recruited from (a) daycares throughout the Edmonton area, (b) word of mouth, (c) advertisements placed in Edmonton's Child and Family Focus magazines, and (d) advertisements placed on parenting message boards on the internet. The population studied was predominantly middle- to upper-class (over \$70,00/year total family income) and Caucasian (87% Caucasian; 10% Mixed Ethnicity; 2% Asian). The sample used in the present study was selected from the first 40 families out of 46 that completed their questionnaire and observational data. Forty toddlers/preschoolers (22 girls and 18 boys) between the ages of 24 and 42 months of age (mean age of 31.75 months), and both their mothers and fathers participated in the study. All mothers and

fathers were either married or common-law and were living in the same home with their child at the time of the study.

Measures

Questionnaire Data

One self- and other-report measure was used in order to assess parents' perceptions of their own parenting styles as well as their perceptions of their partners' parenting styles. A short version of the *Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire* (PSDQ; Robinson et. al., 2001) was given to both mothers and fathers at the time of the first observation. Some questions on the questionnaire were also modified slightly in order to increase their appropriateness for parents with 2 and 3-year-old toddlers. Parents were asked to fill out the questionnaire separately, without sharing answers with their partners.

The shortened PSDQ (Robinson et al., 2001) is a 32-item self- and other-report instrument with three subscales: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles. For each item, parents are asked to rate themselves, as well as their toddler's second parent, on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(never) to 5 (always). The authoritative scale (internal consistency: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$) is comprised of 15 items related to: warmth/support, reasoning/induction, and democratic participation. The Authoritative scale of the PSDQ was the only scale used in the analyses because the questions in the authoritative scale of the PSDQ appeared to be most related to the responsiveness dimension of the observational coding scheme, and because much research (e.g., Baumrind, 1991) suggests that

the authoritative parenting style is related to more responsive parenting than other parenting styles.

Observational Measures

Parents were observed interacting with their children during a 15-minute play task in which parents and children were allowed free play time with toys that the researcher had brought to the home. Instructions for the task were the same for every parent and were read as follows: "For this task we are interested in how children of different ages play and interact. Here are some toys for the two of you to play with and we will let you know when your play time is up." Toys included a farm set and a carousel/exhibition set.

All observations were videotaped and coded using a coding manual derived, in part, from Kochanska and Aksan's (2004) article, and in part from Johnston et al.'s (2002) study of responsiveness and AD/HD. Items from Kochanska and Aksan's cooperation-interference scale were combined with similar items from Johnston et al.'s authoritative control scale; items from Kochanska and Aksan's acceptance-rejection scale were combined with similar items from Johnston et al.'s positive affect and acceptance scales; and some items from Kochanska and Aksan's sensitivity-insensitivity scale were combined with similar items from Johnston et al.'s involvement scale, whereas others were combined with similar items from Johnston et al.'s sensitivity of control scale.

Responsiveness was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that included several aspects of parenting behavior (see Appendix for complete coding scheme). As was the case in Johnston et al.'s (2002) study, observers considered

parental responsiveness in the context of the child's needs, developmental level and the situation. Four dimensions of parental responsiveness were observed and each dimension was coded on a 5-point rating scale, with higher scores reflecting more of the construct measured:

1) Sensitivity: This scale describes the quality of the attention a parent gives her/his child. A highly sensitive parent is always "in tune" with the child and aware of the child's needs and feelings. This type of parent is always prompt in responding to both verbal and nonverbal cues and bids. Additionally, a highly sensitive parent always responds appropriately to their child's cues because they understand what the child needs or wants. A highly sensitive parent is also able to direct the child's behavior in a manner that is sensitive to the child's needs. Finally, given that the task for this study was a play task, a highly sensitive parent is able to sense what the child will enjoy and will always be playing with the child when it is appropriate to do so.

2) Affective Tone/Acceptance: This scale describes the parent's emotional tone during the play task. It reflects the extent to which a parent displays genuine feelings of approval toward the child. The highly accepting parent is one who displays a genuine interest in the child and seems to genuinely enjoy interacting with the child. A highly accepting parent is one who displays a great deal of warmth toward the child, never appears disinterested in the child, never appears bored during the interactions, never appears angry or frustrated with the child, is always in a positive mood, and is extremely affectionate toward the child.

3) Authoritativeness/Cooperation: This scale describes a parent's respect for the child as an autonomous individual with his/her own wishes and desires. Although a parent can not always follow the wishes of his/her child, a cooperative/authoritative parent allows the child a moderate amount of autonomy, appropriate to the circumstances. A highly authoritative/cooperative parent also spends more time trying to cooperate with their child rather than interfering or leading at all times. They also tend to lead by example and to give their child choices and options rather than orders. Parents high on authoritativeness are more democratic in the relationship and try to respect their child's feelings/wishes/desires. Furthermore, parents high on cooperation allow the child to take part in the decision making process when it is appropriate to do so. Given that the play task is meant to be child-directed, a highly cooperative parent allows the child to lead the task and always follows the child's lead, while offering suggestions when it is appropriate to do so.

4) Involvement: This scale reflects how much time the parent spends involved with the child during the task. A highly involved parent will appear to be physically and emotionally present for their child during the entire play task. This type of parent will always be watching the child and playing with him/her whenever it is appropriate to do so. A highly involved parent will also initiate conversations with their child and will promptly respond to the child's initiations. Finally, a highly involved parent will always be engaged with the child on the child's level.

Coding

The author completed coding of all observations using a manual she derived after receiving feedback from other psychologists, specialized in the area of parenting and child development, about its appropriateness and effectiveness. Each video contained between 14 and 16 minutes of play/interaction between a parent and his/her child. The videos were stopped every minute and the parent was rated on a 5-point scale for each of the 4 dimensions of responsiveness. After each video had been coded along the 4 dimensions for each of the 14-16 minutes of the task, the scores for each dimension were averaged for each parent. Finally, an average of the 4 dimension scores was calculated for each parent in order to obtain a Total Responsiveness score.

Reliability

In order to obtain inter-rater reliability a research assistant, who was blind to the study questions and design, as well as to the author's ratings, was trained on the coding manual. Thirty percent of the interactions were coded independently to check for reliability. Cohen's kappas were calculated for each of the four situations using methods derived from Bakeman and Gottman (1997). Cohen's kappas were as follows: 0.80 for Authoritativeness/Cooperation, 0.88 for Sensitivity, 0.94 for Affective Tone/Acceptance, and 0.86 for Involvement.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The results from the current study will be presented in this chapter. Two different statistical tests were used in order to analyze the data from the two measures used in this study. Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were used to decipher whether mothers and fathers differed in their levels of Total Responsiveness, as well as whether they differed on the 4 different dimensions of responsiveness described in the previous chapter. Finally, Pearson product moment correlations were carried out in order to determine whether there was a relationship between self-reports and partner-reports of authoritativeness, as reported by parents on the PSDQ, and observed measures of both authoritativeness and total responsiveness. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

Differences between Parents on Dimensions of Responsiveness

Tests of heterogeneity and normality were carried out in order to ensure that it would be possible to use ANOVAs to determine whether there were differences between parents on the dimensions of responsiveness. All of the underlying assumptions of the ANOVA were met during this study.

Total Responsiveness

A one-way ANOVA was used to assess whether there was a significant difference between mothers and fathers in their level of Total Responsiveness. The dependent variable was Mean Total Responsiveness. Total Responsiveness was calculated by averaging of all four responsiveness dimensions for each

parent. The independent variables used in these analyses were mothers and fathers. A significant difference was found between mothers and fathers in their level of Total Responsiveness. Mothers were found to be more responsive than fathers and this difference was found to be statistically significant, $F(1, 78) = 4.74, p < .05$. Means and standard deviations for Total Responsiveness and its four dimensions are presented in Table 1.

Four Dimensions of Responsiveness

To assess whether there were significant differences between mothers and fathers on the four dimensions of responsiveness (i.e., in their levels of Authoritativeness/Cooperation, Sensitivity, Affective tone/Acceptance, and Involvement) one-way ANOVAs were conducted, with each of the four dimensions as dependent variables, and mothers and fathers as the independent variable.

A significant difference was found between mothers and fathers in their level of Sensitivity. Mothers were found to be more sensitive than fathers, $F(1, 78) = 5.29, p < .05$.

No other significant differences were found between mothers and fathers on the remaining three dimensions of responsiveness. No significant differences were found between mothers and fathers in their levels of Authoritativeness/Cooperation, $F(1, 78) = 2.90, ns$, or in their in levels of Affective Tone/Acceptance, $F(1, 78) = 2.52, ns$. Finally, no significant differences were found between mothers and fathers in their levels of Involvement during the play task, $F(1, 78) = 3.61, ns$.

Relations between Observed Measures and Questionnaire Data

Pearson product moment correlations were used in order to assess whether there were positive correlations between parents' self-reports and partner-reports of authoritativeness and observed measures of both Total Responsiveness and Authoritativeness/Cooperation. Means and standard deviations for the authoritativeness factor on the PSDQ were as follows: Mothers answering about themselves $M = 4.00$ ($SD = 0.44$); mothers answering about fathers $M = 3.78$ ($SD = 0.54$); fathers answering about themselves $M = 3.84$ ($SD = 0.50$); and fathers answering about mothers $M = 4.09$ ($SD = 0.47$). No relationships were found between the questionnaire data and the observed measures.

Correlations between Self-Reports and Observed Measures

No correlations were found between observed measures of Total Responsiveness and self-reported levels of authoritativeness for mothers ($r = .10$, *ns*), nor were there any correlations found between observed measures of Authoritativeness/Cooperation and self-reported levels of authoritativeness for mothers ($r = -.06$, *ns*). Similarly, no correlations were found between observed measures of Total Responsiveness and self-reported levels of authoritativeness/cooperation for fathers ($r = -.04$, *ns*), and there were no correlations found between observed measures of authoritativeness/cooperation and self-reported levels of authoritativeness for fathers ($r = -.01$, *ns*).

Correlations between Partner-Reports and Observed Measures

No correlations were found between observed measures of Total Responsiveness for mothers and fathers' ratings of mothers' levels of

authoritativeness ($r = .05, ns$), nor were there any correlations found between observed measures of Authoritativeness/Cooperation for mothers and fathers' ratings of mothers' levels of authoritativeness ($r = .04, ns$). Similarly, no correlations were found between observed measures of Total Responsiveness for fathers and mothers' ratings of fathers' levels of authoritativeness ($r = -.14, ns$), and no correlations were found between observed measures of Authoritativeness/Cooperation for fathers and mothers' ratings of fathers' levels of authoritativeness ($r = -.13, ns$).

Relations between Self-Report Data and Partner-Report Data

Pearson product moment correlations were also used in order to assess whether there might be relationships between parents self-reports of authoritativeness and between parents' reports of their partners' levels of authoritativeness. Although no correlations were found between questionnaire data and observational measures, positive relationships were found between mothers' and fathers' responses to questions on the authoritativeness scale of the PSDQ.

Mothers' self-reports and fathers' self-reports of authoritativeness were found to be positively correlated, $r = .53$ ($p < 0.001$), as were mother's reports of fathers' levels of authoritativeness and fathers' reports of mothers' levels of authoritativeness, $r = .54$ ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, a positive correlation was found between mothers' ratings of their own authoritative parenting style and their ratings of their partner's authoritative style, $r = .76$ ($p < 0.001$). A positive link was also found between fathers' ratings of their own authoritative parenting style

and their ratings of their partner's authoritative style, $r = .73$ ($p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between mothers' self-reports and fathers reports about mothers' authoritative parenting style, $r = .70$ ($p < 0.001$).

Finally, a positive relationship was also found between fathers' self-reports and mothers' reports of fathers' authoritative parenting style, $r = .65$ ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Mothers and Fathers on Levels of Total
Responsiveness and its Four Dimensions

	Mean	Standard deviation
<u>Total Responsiveness</u>		
Mothers	4.31	.41
Fathers	4.10	.44
<u>Authoritativeness/Cooperation</u>		
Mothers	4.30	.36
Fathers	4.16	.39
<u>Sensitivity</u>		
Mothers	4.35	.50
Fathers	4.08	.55
<u>Affective Tone/Acceptance</u>		
Mothers	4.33	.56
Fathers	4.12	.60
<u>Involvement</u>		
Mothers	4.26	.47
Fathers	4.06	.51

Note. N = 80

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In this final chapter, the results from the current study will be interpreted and discussed in relation to past research. Additionally, the limitations of this study will be discussed. Finally, directions for future research will be presented.

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain whether there may be differences between mothers and fathers in their levels of responsiveness toward their toddlers. Few studies have been able to directly compare mothers and fathers on observed measures of parenting and responsiveness and those studies that have been able to make such comparisons have yielded equivocal results. Differences in overall levels of responsiveness were found in the current study.

In addition to examining mothers' and fathers' levels of responsiveness, the current study sought to discern whether parents' ratings of their own and their partners' parenting styles might be positively linked to the parenting styles that were observed over the course of this investigation. No correlations were found between self- and other-reports of parenting styles and observed measures.

Finally, this study sought to replicate the findings of previous research (e.g., Russell, et al., 2003; Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino 2005), which suggest that mothers' and fathers' self-report ratings of authoritativeness are not related.

Interpretation of Results

Differences between Parents on Dimensions of Responsiveness

Total responsiveness. The results of this study supported the prediction that mothers would be found to score higher on levels of Total Responsiveness

than fathers. These findings are consistent with the findings of Kochanska and Aksan (2004) and add to the body of existing literature that suggests that mothers tend to be more responsive than fathers. Although some previous studies have found that mothers spend less time interacting in play activities than fathers do (e.g., Parke, 2002), the current results suggest that mothers still tend to be sensitive and responsive to their children's needs when they do spend time immersed in play activities. Although the current study did not measure levels of parental involvement, it is possible that the lower levels of paternal responsiveness found in this study may be reflective of lower levels of paternal involvement that have been found in previous research (e.g., Pleck, 1997; Yeung et al., 2001). It seems reasonable to assume that the less time a father spends with his child, the less he is going to know about that child's temperament, abilities, needs, or desires. The level of father involvement has, however, been found to be increasing over the past few decades (Pleck 1997; Yeung et. al., 2001). It is hoped that as the level of paternal involvement continues to increase, so too may their levels of responsiveness.

Four dimensions of responsiveness. As predicted, mothers were found to display higher levels of sensitivity during the play task than fathers. This result is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Lovas, 2005; Power & Parke, 1983; Volling et al., 2002), which have found that fathers scored lower on measures of emotional availability and sensitivity than mothers. It is, however, important to note that there is a possibility that such measures of sensitivity and emotional availability may be biased toward more feminine types of parenting styles. Given

that the majority of parenting research is based on mother-child interactions, the examples of positive parenting in the existing literature are derived almost exclusively from mother-child interactions and may not tap into the types of sensitivity that fathers might be more likely to display.

Nonetheless, as was the case with their levels of Total Responsiveness, it is thought that fathers in this sample may have had more difficulty being sensitive to their children's needs because they may not be as involved as mothers in day-to-day activities with their toddlers. Less time spent interacting with their toddlers may mean that fathers have less time to learn about the cues their children may give out, less time to learn about their children's temperaments and interaction styles, and less time to learn what their children need, want, or enjoy.

Another possible reason for the discrepancy between mothers and fathers in their levels of sensitivity may be that it is more socially acceptable for mothers to be sensitive and emotionally available than fathers. It is possible that males are simply not taught to be as sensitive as females by their parents, and by society in general. If this is the case, it would be especially helpful for fathers to try to learn more about how they can increase their levels of sensitivity and contribute positively to their children's well-being.

Results in the area of parental involvement with their child during the play task were also as predicted. Mothers and fathers were found to display similar levels of involvement with their children during this task. Given that fathers have been found to be more involved in play tasks than in other tasks, such as child-rearing, it is understandable that they would be as involved as mothers during

such as task (Parke, 2002). It is, however, important to note that, if a different task, such as a feeding task or teaching task, had been presented to parents, these results may have been different. This possibility might be seen as an important limitation of the present study and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Despite speculation that mothers may display more authoritative/cooperative tendencies than fathers, no such differences were found in this study. These findings contradict previous findings which indicate that both mothers and fathers tend to rate mothers as being more authoritative (Russell et al., 2003; Tein et al., 1994). It is possible, however, that differences between fathers and mothers on the dimension of authoritativeness/cooperation may be more apparent during activities that involve higher levels of parental control, such as during a clean-up task or teaching task. Fathers have often been rated as being more authoritarian (e.g., Russell et al., 2003), however, such differences have been found to be more pronounced when taking part in child-rearing and when issues of discipline are involved (Baker & Heller, 1996). Thus, the failure to find differences between mothers and fathers in their levels of authoritativeness may be linked to the fact that the task in the present study most often involved very little discipline. A final possibility for the failure to find differences between parents in their levels of authoritativeness/cooperation is that the prediction made was based largely on previous findings from self- and partner-report data (e.g., Russell, et al., 2003), rather than on observational data. No correlations were found between questionnaire data and observed measures of authoritativeness during this study, thus calling into question the use of only questionnaire data to

draw inferences about parenting behavior. Given the disparity between the observational data and questionnaire data used in the current study, it seems reasonable to conclude that it may not have been prudent to have made hypotheses based on questionnaire data alone.

The results with regards to affective tone/acceptance were also not as predicted. Fathers were not found to differ significantly from mothers in their levels of warmth, acceptance, and genuine interest in their children. Given that previous research in this area has yielded some contradictory findings, the current results do support the findings of some previous studies (e.g., Russell & Russell, 1989), which suggest that fathers may simply display their caring attitudes and warmth in different ways than mothers do. Although the reasons for this finding are unclear, it is possible that fathers in the current study were found to be relatively warm and accepting as a result of the task presented to them. Given that this task was meant to be fun and enjoyable for both children and parents, it may have been easier for fathers to display genuine pleasure and warmth during this task than it might have been during a less pleasurable task. Another possible reason for these findings is that, although having less time to interact with their children may make it more difficult for fathers to understand the needs of their children, therefore making it more difficult to be responsive to those needs, this lower level of interaction time does not necessarily make it more difficult to be warm and accepting toward their children. In fact, it is possible that since some fathers do not get to see their children as much as mothers do, they may be more

inclined to be warm and to genuinely enjoy the limited time that they do have with their children.

Relations between Observed Measures and Self-Report Data

As hypothesized, no relationship was found between parents' perceived authoritative parenting styles and observed measures of such styles (namely authoritativeness/cooperation and total responsiveness). This finding is consistent with previous research (e.g., Browne, 2000; Busch, 2006) which indicates that some parents may not be as accurate at reporting their parenting behaviors and styles as they might think. This finding seems to have especially important ramifications for parents and mental health professionals. Authoritative parenting has often been linked to more favorable child outcomes for children than authoritarian or permissive parenting styles (e.g., Baumrind, 1971; Coopersmith 1967), yet although some parents may believe they are fairly authoritative parents, the current study suggests that this may not necessarily be true in all cases. As such, it seems that it may be important to help parents learn to decipher different parenting styles and to learn more authoritative parenting techniques.

Relations between Self-Report and Partner-Report Data on the PSDQ

Although questionnaire data and observed measures of authoritativeness and responsiveness were not found to be related, we did find a positive relationship between parents' perceptions of their own parenting styles and their perceptions of their partner's parenting styles. This finding is inconsistent with previous research (e.g., Russell, et al., 2003; Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino 2005), and suggests that, although parents may not always be correct in

identifying how they are parenting their toddlers, they generally do believe that they are congruent with their partners in terms of parenting styles. This perception is likely to be important for familial cohesiveness, as previous research has found that consistent parenting practices are associated with more reliable and harmonious parenting, while incompatible parenting approaches are often linked to conflict and stress in marital relationships (Gable, Crnic, & Belsky, 1994). The reason for the disparity between the current findings and previous research is unclear; however it is possible that differences may be partially attributable to differences in socioeconomic status of the participants in the sample. This disparity does, however, suggest that further research in this area is warranted.

Finally, results of this study also indicate that there is a positive relationship between how parents rate themselves and how their partners rate them in terms of the authoritative parenting style. That is, parents who rated themselves as highly authoritative also had partners who rated them as highly authoritative. As with the previous finding, it seems that this congruence would be important for marital cohesion and harmony; however, such congruence may sometimes be detrimental to the children involved, given that self-reported parenting styles were not found to be related to observed measures of such styles. As such, it would be important to help parents learn to notice how their perceptions may differ from reality so that they might be better able to adapt their true parenting style to meet the needs of their children.

Limitations of the Study

Although many of the findings from this study are supported by past research and offer many interesting insights in parenting styles and parental responsiveness, certain limitations of this study need to be addressed. Firstly, although the home environment is a relatively naturalistic setting for studies that involve observations of families, it is impossible to be sure that parents were acting in a completely natural way when they were being videotaped interacting with their children in their homes. Though the home is one of the most appropriate settings to obtain results that are generalizable to the real-world, it is still likely that parents and children are not always completely comfortable having a researcher in their homes, observing them. Given that parents and children may not always behave exactly the same way during observations as they would if a researcher was not present, it is important to interpret the results of this study with caution.

Another limitation of the present study concerns its relatively small sample size. It can be difficult to enlist large numbers of participants when conducting observational research because of both the time constraints it places on the families involved and because of the extensive amount of time that is required to review and code the data. It was for these reasons that a smaller sample size was used for this study. Yet, such observational data also has the capacity to offer a great deal of rich and detailed information. It was felt that directly observing parents interacting with their children might offer some additional information that would not have been available through questionnaire

data alone. It was for these reasons that observations on a smaller sample were conducted in conjunction with the collection of questionnaire data. It is, however, important to recognize this small sample size as a limitation to this study, and it is understood that the chosen sample may not be completely representative of the population being studied (Bryman, 2004).

In addition to sample size being a limitation of this study, another constraint can be found in the sample itself. Although any family was allowed to participate, the sample of this study was primarily a volunteer sample or a self-selected sample. It is possible that a self-selection bias may have occurred during this study. For example, it is possible that those families who agreed to participate were those with parents who tend to be more vocal or more active in their children's lives. It is also possible that the parents who agreed to participate were those with children who have more easy temperaments. Additionally, it seems that the families who volunteered to participate in this study were primarily in the middle- to upper-class range of socio-economic-status.

Given that the sample in the current study consisted of primarily middle- to upper-class Caucasian families in the Edmonton area, caution should be used in generalizing the findings of this study to other populations. For example, it is possible that differing levels of responsiveness may have been found in lower-income homes, where both parents might have to be working long hours out of the home and may not have as much time to spend with their children on a daily basis.

Additionally, another drawback of this investigation involves the methodology. As was noted in the second chapter, we chose to look only at how parents interact with their children, rather than looking at the dyadic aspect of parent-child interactions because of both time constraints and because it was thought that coding only parent behaviors would, nonetheless, provide us with pertinent information. Studying only one side of the parent-child dyad is, however, limiting as to the information it provides. For example, it is clear that a parent's reaction to their child and their ability to be responsive to that child's need is always dependent on that child's behavior, temperament, and needs. It is therefore, important that future research be geared toward looking at both sides of the parent-child dyad, as well as the dyad as an entity in itself.

Finally, as stated earlier in this chapter, one of the major limitations of this investigation is that parents and toddlers were only observed interacting in one type of task. It is clear that parents may interact differently with their children when the task is seen as child-directed and fun, versus when the task involves stress for the child, such as during a clean-up activity, or possible stress for the parent, such as during a teaching task. The results of this study would most likely have differed if other tasks were used; however, it is still felt that an abundance of rich information was collected during this investigation nonetheless. Studying parental responsiveness during other such tasks will likely be an important direction for future research.

Implications of the Study

Despite its limitations, the present study did lend further support to many previous studies in the area of parental responsiveness and parenting styles. The findings that fathers still tend to be less responsive than mothers, and that parents might not always be accurate in interpreting their own parenting styles, also have practical implications for parents. These findings may also be useful for practicing psychologists or parent educators, who strive to help parents interact in more healthy ways with their children.

Much research attests to the fact that responsive and authoritative parenting leads to more optimal child outcomes than parenting styles that are more permissive, more authoritarian, less sensitive and less responsive (e.g., Baumrind, 1971; Johnston et. al, 2002; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Thus, given the results of the present study and similar studies in the area of responsiveness, namely that fathers are less responsive than mothers, it seems critical that mental health professionals take the time that is required to educate parents, not only about how to parent newborn infants, but also how to parent in ways that might be more conducive to positive toddler, child, and adolescent outcomes. Furthermore, given the finding that parent ratings of their parenting styles were not related to observed styles, it may also be important to help parents bridge the gap between perceived and actual methods and styles of parenting their children.

Future Directions for Research

Over the course of collecting the data for this study, parents and toddlers were also observed interacting during a teaching task and a clean-up task.

Although time constraints limited the number of tasks that could be coded over the course of the present study, it is thought that these other two tasks would be a rich source of information for future research studies. Given that parents have been found to be differentially involved in different parent-child activities within the home, a comparison of parental responsiveness over a variety of different tasks is warranted (Parke, 2002).

Finally, given the scarcity of research directly comparing mothers and fathers on observational measures of responsiveness, it is thought that more research in this area would be necessary in the future. Studies that take socioeconomic factors and ethnic belief systems into account may serve to further broaden our understanding of the differences between parents on measures of responsiveness and parenting styles.

Conclusion

The findings from the current study lend further support to the idea that, although fathers have begun to spend more time directly involved in their children's lives over the past few decades, there is still room for growth for fathers in the area of sensitivity and responsiveness. It is clear from the literature that both fathers and mothers play an important role in their children's lives, and that responsive, authoritative parenting by both parents leads to more positive child outcomes (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Parke, 2002). It is, therefore, hoped that, as fathers continue to become more focal in the lives of their children, that their ability to respond in warm and sensitive ways to their children's needs will also continue to increase. Finally, it is also hoped that with this research may help

parents to better understand how their ways of interacting with their children can greatly affect child outcomes. In this way, parents may be better able to adapt their parenting styles in ways that will best suit their children's needs.

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Appendix

Coding Scheme

For each dimension, ratings are made on a 1 to 5 scale. The entire range of each rating scale should be used as appropriate. Each dimension is rated independently, thus a high score on one dimension does not imply a high score on other dimensions; however, it is possible that ratings across the dimensions will be correlated.

Authoritative Control/ Cooperation

This scale describes a parent's respect for the child as an autonomous individual with his/her own wishes and desires. Although a child's wishes and desires must not be always abided, a cooperative parent allows the child a moderate amount of autonomy, appropriate to the circumstances. Parents high on authoritative control are more democratic in the relationship and try to respect their child's feelings/wishes/desires. Furthermore, parents high on cooperation allow the child to take part in the decision making process when it is appropriate to do so. Given that the play task is meant to be child-directed, a highly cooperative parent allows the child to lead the task and always follows the child's lead.

(5) The highly cooperative and authoritative parent is one who acknowledges that the child is an autonomous person, with his/her own wishes and desires, and who is deserving of respect as an individual.

A highly cooperative/authoritative parent:

- Allows the child a moderate level of autonomy and control over the situation, at a level that is appropriate to the circumstances
- Given that the play task is meant to be more child-directed than parent-directed, the highly cooperative parent should always be following the child's lead rather than leading the task
- The highly cooperative parent is always playing with the child during the task and is never doing "their own thing"
- When child engages in exploratory behavior, parent always ENCOURAGES this behavior when not inappropriate or dangerous
- Encourages child to participate in decision-making whenever appropriate to do so. (For example, given that the play task should be child-directed, the highly cooperative/authoritative parent always allows child to choose which toy to play with)
- Does not use direct commands in play task, but gives the child ideas instead
- Gives the child options in order to change behavior
- If directives are necessary (i.e., in order to bring the child back into the camera's view), they should be asked in a polite and calm, yet firm manner. (ie "Can you come back and play here please"), but parent should always give child appropriate rationales for these directives or suggestions. (Directives are never given in a command statement, such as "Put that away now", and the rationale should never be "because I said so")

(4) A somewhat cooperative/authoritative parent sometimes (more than half the time) acknowledges the autonomy and wishes of the child and often considers the child's desires and feelings, within reasonable limits. The somewhat cooperative parent:

- May be leading the task occasionally (1 or 2 times) but
- Allows child to take some of the lead within the limits of the agenda set by the parent
- OR may be occasionally doing their own thing during the task (1 time) (ie, may be playing with a toy on their own while their child is off playing with a different toy), but is usually playing with the child and following the child's lead (90% of time)
- Always Allowing exploratory behavior but NOT always encouraging this behaviour
- Allowing for more cooperation than interference (over 75%)
- Rarely uses direct commands (only once or twice), but instead usually offers suggestions (i.e. "Why don't we clean up now").
- Commands are usually followed by an appropriate rationale, but not always
- Any commands are not overly harsh/coercive/intrusive
- When it is necessary to physically redirect the child, does so in a gentle and guiding way.

(3) The cooperative/interfering parent does not always appear to have respect for the child's individuality or autonomy. Oftentimes, the parent's agenda takes

precedence, although he or she may deviate from it occasionally. Interference may also take the form of physical interference with the child's activities, either by physically redirecting the child's behavior or by reorganizing the situation, without concern for the child's preference.

The cooperative/interfering:

- Shows somewhat equal amounts of cooperation and interference (ie, half the time they are being controlling and half the time they are allowing child their autonomy)
- AND/OR half of the time they are playing with child and half the time they are doing their own thing (i.e. following own agenda and may be ignoring child for periods of time)
- Sometimes chooses toys/ games, despite cues from child that he/she is not interested, but sometimes allows the child to choose the toys
- Sometimes restricts child's exploratory behavior when it does not comply with the PARENT'S agenda (not the task agenda, such as cleanup).
- Sometimes will not modify agenda to meet needs of child, but sometimes does modify agenda
- Sometimes uses direct commands and rarely uses appropriate rationales
- Often gives child commands, which are sometimes direct rather than open-ended, and which are sometimes coercive in nature (i.e., "you need to clean up, or else")
- When physically redirecting child, may do so in a controlling manner.

(2) An interfering/authoritarian parent:

- Rarely follows child's lead and usually does not modify agenda
- Uses more interference than cooperation (over 50% interfering).
- Shows little regard for child's preferences (when child shows clear preference).
- When physically redirecting child, may do so in a harsh/coercive manner.
- Commands are almost always directive
- Usually no appropriate rationales for commands
- Parent's agenda usually takes precedence.

(1) The highly interfering and authoritarian parent does not appear to have any respect for his/her child's individuality or autonomy. Usually, the parent's agenda takes precedence, and is the only acceptable agenda to follow. The highly interfering parent allows little deviation from their own agenda or plan. Interference may also take the form of physical interference or physical restraint with the child's activities, either by physically redirecting the child's behavior, holding the child back from doing something, or by reorganizing the situation, without concern for the child's preference.

A highly interfering/authoritarian parent:

- Is both physically and emotionally controlling all the time
- Limits child's freedom of movement and action
- Structures all of the child's activities for him/her
- Always chooses toys/ games, despite cues from child that he/she is not interested.
- Shows no desire to modify agenda, even during play.

- Runs activity in a way that suits his/her own needs/desires rather than the child's needs/desires
- Completes tasks with little regard for child's preferences
- Is quick to restrict child's exploratory behavior when it does not comply with his/her agenda.
- Discounts child's desires.
- Always uses direct commands, which are always harsh/coercive and demands submission
- Commands are often threats
- No appropriate rationales for commands
- Treats child like an inanimate object (i.e., physically moves child's limb to perform the behavior desired by the parent when unnecessary).

Sensitivity

This scale describes the quality of the attention a parent gives her/his child. It refers to how aware the parent is of the child's needs/feelings/whereabouts, and how promptly and appropriately the parent responds to the child's cues or signals. It also involves the extent to which the child's needs are met by the parent and the extent to which the parent directs the child's behaviour in a manner that is sensitive to the child's needs.

(5) The highly sensitive parent is one who is very aware of the child and his/her needs. A highly sensitive parent:

- Always quickly and appropriately responds to child's verbal and nonverbal bids (sneezes, falling down, etc).

- ALWAYS understands child's signals/verbalizations and responds promptly and appropriately.
- ALWAYS aware of the child's feelings, needs, and whereabouts
- Given that during the play task a great deal of the child's "needs" likely revolve around having their parent play with them, a highly sensitive parent will respond to this need by playing with their child for the entire play task
- Offers child a great deal of spontaneous attention
- Definitely has an emotional presence with his/her child throughout paradigm; is "in tune" with child.
- Is capable of engaging child, and uses this ability to make tasks more enjoyable,
- Senses and perceives things that the child enjoys or wants (such as tickling, singing, etc.), and responds appropriately.
- Uses guiding questions to teach child about task
- Sets limits for child when appropriate, but does not attempt to control the situation when it is not required (ie, exerts firm but sensitive control when child's attention has wandered or when child is not behaving appropriately, but allows child to have some degree of control over the task otherwise)
- When appropriate to set limits, control is exerted in a firm, yet sensitive way (ie, Validates child's wants and desires even if he or she ultimately needs to restrict the child's behavior)

- Uses clear and direct messages to direct the child toward appropriate behavior when appropriate to control the behavior
- NEVER makes demands that are unreasonable for the child or that are beyond the child's ability or level of understanding
- Pauses after giving child instructions to allow them time to respond

(4) The somewhat sensitive parent is one who is often aware of the child and his/her needs and often responds, but doesn't anticipate his/her needs.

A sensitive parent:

- Frequently is prompt in responding to the child's bids.
- Always responds to child's verbal cues and usually responds to nonverbal cues (might not respond 1 time)
- Most often playing with child (over 75% of the time) (responding to their need to have the parent play with them), but may be "doing their own thing" for a short period of time
- Offers child much spontaneous attention
- Usually shows a good emotional presence with the child (might waver 1 time)
- Often senses and perceives things that the child enjoys or wants (such as tickling, singing, etc.), and responds appropriately.
- Is usually correct in interpreting the child's signals
- Usually senses and perceives things that the child enjoys or wants (such as tickling, singing, etc.), and responds appropriately.

- Sometimes validates the child's wants and desires even if he/she ultimately needs to restrict the child's behavior.
- Is sometimes capable of engaging child, and uses this ability to make tasks more enjoyable
- Usually sets limits for child when appropriate, but does not attempt to control the situation when it is not required (ie, exerts firm but sensitive control when child's attention has wandered or when child is not behaving appropriately, but allows child to have some degree of control over the task otherwise)
- BUT sometimes tries to direct minute details of the activity and/or sometimes fails to set limits when they are needed
- When appropriate to set limits, control is often, but not always, exerted in a firm, yet sensitive way (ie, Validates child's wants and desires even if he or she ultimately needs to restrict the child's behavior)
- Usually doesn't make demands that are unreasonable for the child or that are beyond the child's ability or level of understanding
- Usually pauses after giving child instructions to allow them time to respond

(3) A somewhat sensitive parent is one who only sometimes has an emotional presence with the child and appears to be "in tune" only some of the time.

A sensitive parent:

- Usually responds to the child's verbal cues but sometimes fails to respond to a question the first time the child asks AND often does not respond to child's non-verbal cues.
- Is sometimes correct in interpreting the child's needs/signals
- May respond to child but does not give spontaneous attention
- May just be watching the child rather than playing with the child most of the time
- Does not always respond appropriately (includes "automated" responses, such as "really", "uh-huh", etc).
- Emotional presence may be lacking somewhat or for some period of time
- Sometimes restricts behavior when not appropriate and/or sometimes fails to set limits for the child when they are needed
- Messages directed at child are sometimes unclear or ambiguous

(2) An insensitive parent:

Is often unaware of the child and his/her needs. When the child signals for attention, parent acts relatively slowly and often inappropriately to attend to the infant, sometimes misinterpreting the child's signal. The insensitive parent is not really "in tune" with the situation surrounding the child. Sometimes parent can perceive the possibility of trouble and redirect the situation appropriately, but not usually. Often does not have an "emotional presence" with his/her child.

- Does not play with the child
- Never responds to child's nonverbal cues and often does not respond to verbal cues or questions

- Often Discounts the child's bids/signals
- Doesn't respond to child's overt non-verbal (e.g., physiological) cues and sometimes fails to respond to child's verbal cues
- Not "in tune" to child's situation, wants, feelings, desires, etc.
- Doesn't make an effort to choose things that the child wants and usually forces activities on child that the child isn't interested in
- Doesn't validate child's wants and desires when restricting behavior.
- Restricts behavior in an overly controlling and overly firm way, without attempting to be sensitive to the child
- Usually restricts behavior when inappropriate OR usually fails to set limits to behaviors (ie, lets child do whatever they want, even if behavior is inappropriate)
- Usually makes demands on child that are unreasonable for the child's ability level or level of understanding

(1) The highly insensitive parent is not concerned as much with the situation of the child as with his/her own situation and agenda. If parent responds to the signals of the child, is likely to do so in a way inconsistent and inappropriate to the meaning of the child's signal.

A highly insensitive parent:

- Is more likely to respond to negative behaviors when the child displays both positive and negative behaviors.
- Pays little to no attention to the child

- Does not respond verbally or otherwise to child's cues (both verbal and nonverbal cues).
- Response time is very slow and child has to give the signal more than once
- Is unresponsive and uninvolved during activities,
- Does not attempt to make activities "fun"
- If excessively forceful when controlling the situation and always controls situation when inappropriate to do so (overly directive and controlling)
- OR Always fails to set limits when they are required (Highly non-directive)
- Instructions given to child are in the form of threats/orders and are too complicated for child to understand (ie, appears that they are trying to scare the child into compliance)
- Never takes child's feelings/needs into account when giving instructions or directing activity

Affective Tone/ Acceptance

This dimension also reflects the parent's emotional tone in the interaction and is coded on the basis of verbal statements, nonverbal gestures, body posture, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Finally, this dimension reflects the extent to which the mother accepts, is affectionate, encourages, and appears to enjoy spending time with the child.

(5) The highly accepting parent is one who displays a very genuine interest in the child and seems to genuinely enjoy interacting with him or her.

A highly accepting parent:

- Appears truly happy with the child, is warm towards the child, takes a lot of pleasure in the activity, has a pleasant/happy tone of voice, is in a good mood, and is relaxed
- Appears to be truly interested in the child and in the interaction
- Appears to truly be having fun when interacting with child (laughs, smiles).
- Never frustrated, angry, irritated (even when child is uncooperative)
- Never withdrawn and always paying attention to the child rather than to other things around them or to other things they have on their mind
- Appropriately (firmly) corrects behavior when necessary, but this affect does not linger.
- Often makes positive comments about child and praises the child's good and ordinary behaviors: indicates an accepting attitude.
- Always shows approval of the child (even if they don't approve of the behavior)
- Acceptance of and affection toward child is evident and unwavering

(4) The accepting parent is one who, most of the time, displays a genuine interest in his/her child and seems to genuinely enjoy interacting with him or her.

An accepting parent:

- More positive tone than neutral tone, but may show a neutral tone for a short period (if there are any instances of negative tone the parent should not receive a "4")

- Most often (at least 75% of time) appears truly happy with the child, is warm towards the child, takes pleasure in the activity, has a pleasant/happy tone of voice, is in a good mood, and is relaxed
- Appears to be truly interested in the child and in the interaction, but may sometimes be doing their "own thing" for a short period and therefore not showing affect toward the child during that short period
- Often appears to truly be having fun when interacting with child (laughs, smiles).
- Does not express frustration when things do not go well or child is uncooperative (verbally and/or affectively).
- Often makes positive comments about child and praises the child's good and ordinary behaviors: indicates an accepting attitude.
- Often shows approval of the child (even if they don't approve of the behavior)
- Acceptance of and affection toward child is evident but may waver a bit
- Appears to enjoy interacting with the child (some positive affect must be present).
- Often makes genuine positive comments about the child's behavior that indicate an accepting attitude (a large percentage of comments made are positive to/about the child).

(3) A somewhat accepting parent is generally content to be with the child, although may not express this overtly as much as more accepting parents.

A somewhat accepting parent:

- Tone and affect are positive/happy about half the time and negative/upset/sad/frustrated about half the time OR emotional tone is most often neutral (calm, quiet, polite but neither warm nor irritated).
- Expresses warmth in about half of interactions with child.
- May express some frustration with child if they are behaving inappropriately but the negative affect does not linger too long
- Makes some genuine positive comments to/about the child sometimes

(2) A somewhat rejecting parent:

- more negative than positive affect and tone
- does not appear to be having a good time with the child most of the time
- Is often disproportionately (to situation) critical of his/her child, and may make critical or rejecting comments directly to child.
- Sometimes even positive verbal statements may be made in a tone indicating disapproval or negative affect.
- May show frustration or impatience, even when not warranted.
- Gets frustrated and even angry when child becomes difficult or less cooperative and may make negative comments about the child in this situation, and negative affect lasts awhile afterwards
- Seems very bored
- Rarely makes genuine positive comments to/about child
- Shows a lot of displeasure, irritation, unhappiness
- Somewhat cold, hostile, rejecting, indifferent
- Little warmth displayed

(1) The highly rejecting parent:

- Displays clear and pronounced anger, displeasure, irritation, sadness, unhappiness during the activity
- Cold, hostile, extremely reserved, indifferent toward child and may make sarcastic remarks
- May laugh at child's mistakes
- No warmth, no approval, no acceptance
- Voice is angry or frustrated
- Rigid posture
- Is easily upset, impatient, and/or irritable when child becomes difficult, unenjoyable, or less cooperative. May make verbal statements indicating disapproval of child, and may direct them to the child
- When he/she disapproves of child's behaviour he/she is extremely harsh and this mood/affect remains for the duration of the activity.
- Often makes derogatory, demeaning, negative, disrespectful comments to or about child
- Never praises the child's good and ordinary behaviors
- Not having fun with child.

Involvement with child

This dimension reflects how much time the mother spends involved with the child. Involvement is indicated by the mother's verbal interactions, her physical presence, and/or her visual attention. This dimension does NOT reflect the affect directed at the activity or the child. (ie: The parent may be highly

involved and not be happy or playful or enjoying their time with the child OR, conversely, the parent may be in a happy/calm/enjoyable mood but not be highly involved with the child).

(5) The highly involved parent:

- Is always paying attention to the child and is always interacting with the child
- Partakes in all activities with child
- Is "engaged" with the child on their level rather than at the parent's level
- Initiates conversation and responds to child's initiations
- High level of physical contact when appropriate with child and high level of eye contact (ie, if the child is exploring, the parent may not need show high levels of physical contact in order to receive a "5", however the parent should always be engaged with the child and should look at the child often)
- Always in close proximity to child when appropriate to the task

(4) The involved parent:

- Is almost always paying attention to the child and interacting with the child, but may focus their attention on something else for a short period of time (1 or 2 times)
- Partakes in activities with child most of the time {over 75% of time}
- Usually initiates conversation and always responds to child's initiations
- Not generally withdrawn and usually paying attention to the child rather than to other things around them or to other things they have on their mind

- Fairly high level of physical contact with child when appropriate and good amount of eye contact
- Almost always in close proximity to child when appropriate

(3) The somewhat involved parent:

- Is paying attention to the child about half of the time
- Is taking part in activities with the child about half of the time
- Sometimes initiates conversation and sometimes responds to child, but sometimes fails to respond
- Sometimes withdrawn but not for too long
- Eye contact may be somewhat lacking

(2) The somewhat absent parent:

- Paying attention to child and interacting with child less than 50% of the time
- Does not initiate conversation with child BUT DOES respond to child's initiations
- Appears disinterested in child some of the time.
- Very withdrawn and preoccupied with other things
- Very little eye contact

(1) The absent parent:

- Extremely withdrawn and is ALMOST NEVER paying attention to the child and is almost NEVER interacting with the child

- Mind appears to be elsewhere for the entire activity (is looking elsewhere, eyes wandering, is doing other things, is not watching the child) and appears very bored with the activity
- Does not partake in activities with child (ie, does not play with them ...simply orders them around)
- Never initiates conversation and Usually ignores child's attempts to interact (even if child asks them directly several times) and NEVER attempts to initiate interaction
- No physical contact with child and no eye contact
- Distances him/herself from child (physically and emotionally)